# film

## review of the advance-guard cinema

7

winter 1933

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review of the advance-guard cinema

number two

winter · nineteen thirty three

# film art

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editor: B. VIVIAN BRAUN. review editor: IRENE NICHOLSON.
associate editors: EDWARD ASHCROFT, ROBERT FAIRTHORNE.

**correspondents**

international (russia, siberia, turkey, greece, yugo-slavia, etc.): MARIE SETON.
paris and berlin: JOHN C. MOORE. new york: LEONARD HACKER.
moscow: H. P. J. MARSHALL. vienna: HUGH GATESKILL.
czechoslovakia: F. Lutz. holland: J. C. M.

**editorial and publishing office**

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# film art

will promote an understanding of cinematic essentials. It will present clear-cut definitions of the fundamentals of true film conception. It will publish the writings, theories, reviews and opinions of both world famous and unknown persons. It is entirely independent of commercialism, and it is not published for money-profit, but for the furtherance of the cause and the carrying out of its ideals.

We desire, firstly, to help and encourage the making and showing of intelligent films. Secondly, to analyse and discover the art film and, thirdly, to act as a guide to the new intellectual film public. Mere talk is insufficient; we must carry theory into practice.

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# film art

## film: definition

The real film is the visual poem.

The real film is the representation of incidents and emotions by moving masses of light variations.

It is the expression *through cinematic form* of the matters or emotions to be expressed.

Poetry is only seldom a subjection of everything to verbal abstraction. Poems can, and do, represent a series of incidents or a story. That the ideal film is a poem in visualness does not mean an incidentless or a storyless film. Film is the cinematic representation of a certain emotion, theme or story. The principles of all may be found in a representation of one. A story film often contains abstract sequences. The abstract film is the emotion-film. It does not rely in any way on its subject matter which is merely a medium through which is expressed the desired emotion. Children laughing, rain on water, corn waving, and a saw cutting wood may all be one logical sequence, perhaps representing joy or exhilaration.

Montage is film editing done constructively. Exactly *when* and *where* each single shot is begun and ended. In a film a scene is meaningless by itself. When mounted, when put with other scenes, it has meaning.

*Film is not a representation of reality.* If it was it would not be art. Nor does this infer that to make a film an art film it must be distorted and made as unreal as possible. If that was so, show everything out of focus! It is the unavoidable (but advantageous) principles of the film which separate it from nature, and make it art. For instance, time and space in cinema know no limitations. In reality time and space are impossible to manipulate. In film they are always being manipulated. That's why we everlastingly talk about montage and say montage montage montage and montage again. Because it is montage (constructive film editing) that is, (in the words of Robert Fairthorne), *the manipulation of (this) sequence and duration to create the desired effect.*

Finally, film is a visual medium. And the visual is the most powerful of all our senses. Through the visual sense may be expressed any other sense. This must be done in film; all our senses must be expressed through the visual one.

B. VIVIAN BRAUN.

# where does art begin?

RUDOLPH ARNHEIM

For a long time it was considered part of the dignity of Fine Art that it should serve no useful purpose. While the rest of mankind worked, artists played with the Muse of their choice, a somewhat frivolous and thoroughly impractical creature, or so people liked to think. The artist was supposed to provide recreation for one's leisure hours and to teach appreciation of " Beauty " (as they liked to call the agreable) at the same time.

It is really surprising that people holding such views did not receive the film with open arms, as art *par excellence*. It aimed at recreation and entertainment, as light-hearted as one could wish, to the exclusion of everything else while surpassing all other arts in the matter of beauty. Yet it gained recognition only by slow degrees and on strangely conflicting terms. Some saw in it only a school-master who should give lessons in Geography, zoology and the like. Official circles usually had education films in mind when referring to films in favourable terms. The art film was "cut" in every sense of the word. Educational films were simply equipment like any atlas or text book and cinema owners looked on it without favour as a cheap introduction to the main programme, not caring in the least whether it was good or bad.

Even real film lovers liked to distinguish between Educational and art films. Their educational value was duly appreciated but film art dealt exclusively with 'dramatic films.' Only occasionally some outstanding educational film showed that the distinction is purely artificial, though this was not realized.

The films of Joris Ivens (*Rain, The Bridge, Zuider Zee*) and the most recent Walter Ruttmann film of the Italian steel works at Terni showed this link. The belief that art must be " useless " shared even by film lovers is responsible for many of the avant garde films which were full of " beauty " but lacked point.

The question where art begins or ends is particularly acute for films because as photography, they can do purely objective reproduction work. Similar distinctions have always existed in literature, e.g. that between a " poetic " and a " professional " style, as though a poet could never equal a professional man in dryness, or a reporter could never write like a poet. Strictly speaking, even the simplest photograph requires the same artistic judgment as a film scene, viz: Correct selection, striking groups, suitable light, etc. No one can photograph a factory or a motor car without showing whether he has an instinctive sense of form or not.

But how far should individuality be suppressed in favour of purely objective reproduction? Experience has shown that purely educational and systematical films do not only exhaust their subject, but also their public.

He who wants to teach must first learn to fascinate. Can it be that aesthetics is simply the science of securing the best effect?

Goethe says: " Characteristic Art is the only true Art ". This is a daring and modern conception which expresses the basic unity of educational and art films. Some countries show a tendency to think of film art in terms of political propaganda, rejecting neutral art which they consider to be an impossibility. As long as the typical art film attempts to rise above all modern questions preferring to be trite or untrue to life rather than take sides, it can hardly expect to rank with the educational film which is nothing if not honest in dealing with some aspect of real life.

The same artists and producers frequently produce educational films which are as true to life as their art films are fanciful. Once the futility of such distinctions as between what is " educational " and what is " beautiful " has been realized, people will see that there are existing things and creatures in the world which have a greater significance than the life of the sea-horse or that of the hermit-crab even if they are described to us with scientific precision. And once the art film develops to the point of fearlessly attacking our essential problems of life, we shall have only one homogeneous film art making use of all artistic media with absolute truthfulness and telling effect.

announcement

**film art**

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# i look at british film criticism

JOHN C. MOORE
paris and berlin correspondent of film art

After having been in England now, on and off, for some considerable time, I have come to the conclusion that, after the United States, England is the worst country in film criticism.

It has always struck me as odd, that for almost any profession in the world one has to pass a test of some severity, whereas for such a responsible position as film critic any failure in Fleet Street is considered good enough. I believe that the duties of a film critic should go further than the mere ability to write a poor, though sometimes spicy, narrative of the content of a film; and many will agree with me that to ask for an intelligent comment on some other details, such as the acting, the assembling of material and the construction, the film as a theme and the handling of that theme by the director, the lighting, the camerawork and sometimes the decoration, would not be unreasonable.

However, such explicit analyses are extremely rare in England, doubtless owing to the fact that the majority of British critics do not possess even an elementary knowledge of film production, whilst their cinematic outlook is distinctly amateurish. It will be noticed that at all times they have shown an inborn dislike, distrust even, of anything so vital to the cinema as cutting, and consequently the long cut, the short cut and the cross cut are considered tabu by the British press. It has here to be admitted that occasionally, to relieve the tediousness of their articles, the critics throw in at random such technicalities as " rhythm " and " continuity," but it will be observed that these words are generally employed in the wrong connection.

There is no denying that most English film critics are unable to judge the film as a constructive whole, and when confronted with a picture of more than usual merit, they invariably are at a complete loss how to deal with the matter. For such special occasions favourite words like " arty " and " propaganda " are reserved, with an occasional reference to " the beautiful pictorial composition."

Another grave mistake of the average British film critic of to-day is, that he considers it to be his duty to flatter his readers and coax them into the belief that their knowledge of the film is far above the average; to my mind a highly dangerous policy. A glance at the ever popular " reader's letters " in practically all the film weeklies will cure anybody of the idea that the public has become film conscious.

Without a doubt those popularity contests, arranged by periodicals to establish the best film or the best screen performance of the year, tend to distort the view of the average picturegoer; especially when these opinions are endorsed by the press. It should not be lost sight of that, firstly filmgoers are at present incapable of judging the merits of an outstanding film (they can, of course, assist in giving a general idea of popular taste; but that is something quite different) and that secondly it is futile for them to cast their votes for the outstanding screen performance of the year, as long as they are not intimately acquainted with, for instance, the work of a screen personality of the calibre of Elisabeth Bergner, who might, quite easily, oppose

their selected Constance Bennett or Joan Crawford. Indeed, these popularity ballots, which on so many occasions have proved to be nothing but a sheer farce (*The Student Prince, The Patriot, etc.*) are a menace to the natural development of the film, and critics who endorse the views of the public in these contests are to be condemned.

British film journalism has modelled itself far too much on the American style, and the reverence with which Louella O. Parsons, Executive Film Editor of the Hearst Press, was received in this country during her recent visit, makes one think seriously. Louella Parsons, I understand, can make or break a " star " in Hollywood. After reading a few of her articles I am convinced she can. But I am also equally convinced that she will never be able to make or break an artist of quality. She doubtless has an expert knowledge of the matrimonial adventures of all Hollywood " stars ", and is evidently well acquainted with their pet hobbies and pet diversions. But further her knowledge of the cinema does not go; indeed her powers of criticism are scarcely above those of any novice. In a flaming article in the *Daily Mail* she concluded with: "I return to America realising that Germany, France and England are making important progress in motion picture production. . . . . "

This, of course, goes without comment.

Now in English film journalism one stumbles all too frequently over similar gross misrepresentations, and what makes matters worse is the fact that these statements are taken in dead earnest by both parties; the readers as well as the writers. As a typical example of screen journalism in this country I would cite a criticism of Shanghai Express which came to my notice the other day. " The direction ", this critic wrote, " leisurely and atmospheric (!), represents easily the best work of von Sternberg". He also spoke of the restraint of its director.

Now poor Joe Sternberg has been accused of many a thing in his film career, but I doubt if he has ever before been attributed with restraint. As a matter of fact, restraint and Sternberg are incompatible terms.

However, since my arrival in England I was most struck by an article entitled " Blah about the British Talkies ", which appeared in the British Film Triple Number of Film Weekly. It was written by Mr. Harry Hughes, " The well-known British Director ".

I do not profess to be an authority on the British film, though I am fairly well acquainted with the work of John Grierson, Alfred Hitchcock, Oswell Blakeston, Anthony Asquith, Wright and a few others; but I have never come across the work of Mr. Harry Hughes. This I regret very much, for if he is as good a director as he is a critic, his work should be worth watching.

Although Mr. Hughes statements in " Blah about the British Talkies " contain little sense, and are—to put it mildly—a little unbalanced, it is only fair to admit that he has an extremely slick pen.

He lashes out mercilessly at the film intellectuals, but he fails to see the difference between a handful of would-be intellectuals and the true students of the film. Indeed, Mr. Hughes considers the intellectuals (students of the film?) a danger to the cinema. He is very emphatic about it. The Soviet directors seem to be lying heavily on his chest, but may I point out to Mr. Hughes that the Soviet directors are essentially of the people, and that, with the exception perhaps of Marcel l'Herbier, the world of the cinema does not know any intellectual directors.

Mr. Hughes also happens to be one of these optimists who, after so many years, still believes that talking pictures were the natural development of the film, and not merely a commercial stunt of Messrs. Warner Brothers to escape the bankruptcy court. I indeed admire his credulity. He further belongs to that group of individuals, now becoming rare, who think that a film photographed from all available angles is, of necessity, a masterpiece.

Surely he is aware, as by now every filmgoer should be, that the use of camera angle is extremely limited, and that the director or cameraman can only employ such shots when he is certain they will tend to enhance the dramatic mood of the scene. I suggest that Mr. Hughes should take a few lessons on the subject, or study closely the work of those two German cameramen F. A. Wagner and Karl Hoffmann. He will, doubtless, find it very instructive.

He also accuses the intellectuals (students of the film?) of being anti-British. He writes: "You must be a Russian, a German, a Frenchman before you can get his (the film student's) attenion", and he spitefully adds: "Not that we want his attention!"

Notwithstanding Mr. Hughes' objection to the experimentalists, they happen to be the very people England is in need of at the moment; a body of artistically thinking men who can visualise the true properties of the cinema, and who, for expression in their medium, do not rely solely on stereotyped imported devices, but go out themselves to try and solve some of the manifold problems still confronting the art of cinematography to-day.

The student of the film is well aware of the limitations of many of the directors in this country, and this may account for his curious attitude towards British film production. He is, however, at all times interested in original conceptions, but most of the outstanding British film productions of recent years are still little known to the general public; a fact that does not speak well for the film executives of this country. The reason for such obscurity is due to the lack of interest of their respective directors in the lingerie parades which Mr. Hughes so obviously thinks necessary to improve British film production.

Mr. Hughes, in his article, sounds very bitter indeed; but I would point out that not even the advent of the talking films has been able to save the American film industry from bankruptcy, and further that audiences everywhere are constantly decreasing. I would also mention that all an ordinary film can do is to run for a week and then be forgotten, whereas films like *Mädchen in Uniform* stand the test, weeks on end, before a highly critical audience, many of whom do not even understand the language.

Now, Mr. Hughes, it happens to be an undeniable fact that Serge Eisenstein and V. I. Pudovkin are better directors than Harry Beaumont of *Dancing Daughters* or Frank Borzage of *Seventh Heaven*; as it is an undeniable fact that Bernard Shaw, for instance, is a better author than Ethel M. Dell. You might as well admit it.

Your article, no doubt, was meant to be spiteful, but you should not forget (a fact agreed upon by all famous people) that it only pays to be spiteful when one is in the right.

It is for this reason I repay you in your own coin!

# distribution of sound

ERIC ELLIOTT

Before making a brief review of some elementary opportunities in sound distribution through time and space, I think we ought to appreciate that in the sounding film the boundary of a mere scene is rather more elastic than it would be on the stage.

We abandon that crude line of demarcation the theatre interposes between existence and nullity, the crude frame of the proscenium (so-called) that cuts off a character's life the instant he goes beyond it and asks for his resurrection each time he enters again. Instinct tells us it is natural for the sides of a frame to cut off vision—a window-frame does that—but very unnatural for them to cut off sound.

The cinema has to recognize this, as it has to recognize every other instinct. It has to avoid the clumsiness of "heard off stage," and it has to avoid the artificialness of all sound being compressed *on* stage.

On the other hand this advantage should not be taken to mean indiscriminate intrusions on the scene of all the noises around it. Concentration of the senses into one field of consciousness is psychologically proper: the film demonstrates this over and over again. Rather, the distinction the screen has to make is that consciousness, not existence, is lost when it leaves this concentrated field.

A mechanical facility to be noted is in the independence of the loudspeaker itself. Noise effects can be spread anywhere in the auditorium. This device, also, may be applied more directly to the dramatic content: for example, a voice cutting in from the back of the theatre to arouse the character on the screen. Incidentally this brings us nearer to the technique of the stage; and, incidentally again, it ought to make us ponder on the subtle distinction, the peculiar attribute, of the usual film technique that brings such sounds from an outside source subjectively into the scene without interrupting the attention of the senses.

Conversely there is the cinematic faculty of narrowing the frame or field to exclude all but a part. In vision, the iris circle, for instance, singling out one face among a crowd. Presumably the voices of a crowd can likewise be cut off by degrees, until only the one voice is heard.

Not to dwell too long now on the merely scenic dispositions of sound, it is enough to remember that both the close-up and the camera angle have their aural counter-parts. The former arrangement is usually for intimacy, hence an aural close-up puts a voice in nearer, not in louder, communication. Regarding angles, the microphone being for the ear what the camera is for the eye—an organ of intuitive observation—it is easy to suppose effective slants of sound. In this way gradation can be given to foregrounds and backgrounds, especially with the help of supplementary microphones. Referring back to our remarks on the frame of the scene, it may be supposed also that there is licence at times to let in an outside sound with more prominence than is given to the inclosed sounds.

Coming to the alliance of incidents in the audible film drama, it is due to observe first that the audible boundary being naturally more extensive than the visible boundary, all sounds within earshot having a proper right to enter the scene without their visible cause, there is scope for great cinematic play without violating any physical laws. Provided with the natural ubiquity of sound, the dramatist can make apt pointers to anything visibly taking place—ironic commentaries. The dramatic action itself can be affected by such insinuations.

Such coincidences can be made to build up any number of illusions, in one scene or in a train of scenes. They may be mutually sympathetic. So the clock ticking in a room may synchronize exactly with the drum beat of an army far away. Attach what material you like here. Sentimental relationship is suggested if there is a mother in the room concerned and a son in the army concerned. Otherwise you can imagine the clock and the marchers as belonging independently to some tense situation between two nations, their pronounced synchronization coming accidentally at the peak of a crisis.

These reactions of sound can go backwards and forwards to an unlimited extent; and one image can not only reciprocate what is audible in another, but can induce a stronger impulse in the active sound. Think of our hero watching the cranes on city buildings, and some aural comparison with the village pump he has left behind him. No reason why we should not see and hear that pump, and his old mother pumping it too; and no reason why a girder should not drop on the youth's head at this very moment, the crash of it finding an echo in an unexpected spasm of the pump!

Sounds, of course, may overlap into a succeeding scene (like the visual lap dissolve), merely for convenience in the transition from one place of action to another. If necessary, only a selection of sounds could be noticeable in the lap. This reminds us of an extended lap device, known in visual technique, of grafting one scene on another through the abstract survival of certain capacities in the closing shot for service in the shot that follows. Merely taking advantage of a feature that is accidentally to duplicate itself in the scene to come; or may be carried so far as to make a concrete analogy.

So there are occasions when a sound in the finish of one scene will do well enough to start another scene; and besides that the resemblance may be pointed to bear on a significant appropriateness in the subjects that are matched. Turning from the episode of a boxing bout to an episode elsewhere in which a girl meets for the first time her mother-in-law-to-be, at a gathering of old society cats, the booing and catcalls that have just greeted the defeated boxer may be sustained audibly as an equally hostile greeting for the girl, without spoiling the decorum that the social vision outwardly maintains.

Great interplay can be made between visible and audible resemblances. A bell shape visually latent in the subject of a terminating scene may emphasize a bell-like sound aurally latent in the scene that follows. All this leads into limitless possibilities and complexities that are beyond the compass of my present review—and perhaps, for very many years, beyond the compass of our practice also.

# dawn of an acoustic typography

ROBERT FAIRTHORNE

Observers of news reels may have noticed a curious droning sound which always accompanies scenes photographed from an aeroplane. This noise is obviously intentional, but its object is rather obscure. It bobs up in sequences which are, except for commentary, unashamedly mute. It resembles, so far as it resembles any aeronautical noise at all, the noise of an aeroplane as heard from the ground, not as heard from the cockpit. So it cannot be an imitation of actual recorded sound. If it is intended to show that the scene was taken from an aeroplane, the information is rather superfluous.

Most likely it is, like the buttons on a coat cuff, the survival of an ancient practice. In the merry days of the early talking films, an ingenious operator used to get similar, if not better, results by displacing the sound head so as to use the edge of the perforations as a sound track. We have here a relic of the old " effects ", and, like them, it is more conventional than realistic. The companies using it are guilty of a highbrow symbolic process, thus diluting the entertainment of the public.

The interesting thing about this noise is not what it is meant to be, but what it has actually become. Being associated for so long with aerial views, it goes on being associated with them, even in quite different scenes. Photograph a dolls house from above with a moving camera, and mix it with this sound. The scale of the picture will be increased by purely acoustic means. Do the same with a picture of a mans feet, and you create the illusion of a giant.

One sees here the natural growth of an acoustic typography. Just as pictures of objects conventionalised into hieroglyphics, and hieroglyphics into purely formal signs, so may the sounds of activities grow into purely formal sounds. Their meaning will depend on the type of scene with which they become associated and will, as do all symbols, become more general and more abstract as their use is extended. It is important to note that sounds are associated with actions, not with objects. You cannot make a noise like a tea pot, but you can make a noise like a tea, or other, pot breaking, as Disney has shown.

Since sound is concerned with action, an acoustic typography will resemble in function the multiplication, division, and addition signs of arithmetic, rather than words. It will give us an acoustic method of achieving the illusions obtained optically by the processes of Dunning and Schufftan. As shown, even today the conventional aeroplane noise can increase the scale of the picture.

Sound may possibly supply kinematical detail. For instance, in *The Beach Party* Disney shows a horse repelling an invading octopus by gliding a slice of melon along its teeth, and spitting out the pips like a machine gun. To this is added the sound made by a typewriter platten when starting a new line. A comparison of motion has been made by sound. For all one can tell, the typewriter noise may become the symbol, not for a typewriter, but for

this kind of movement. The idea is not far-fetched; in literature the adjective ' shuttle-like ' is legitimate, and understood by people who have never seen a loom.

The use of conventional sounds will depend on the way in which they develop, and that is difficult to predict. The aeroplane noise is associated, at the moment, with three things; aeroplanes in flight, distant landscapes, and a downward pointing camera from a moving view point. By chance it has become strongly associated with the last two. If it were invariably connected with the last one only, to graft it on to a shot of the dome of St Pauls, would be to create the impression that St Pauls was upside down. This is not altogether a reductio ad absurdum.

The growth of these symbols cannot be forced, but it can be encouraged. Film trademarks offer a field for harmless experiment in the more fantastic applications. There was room in *If I had a Million* for an extra episode, unconnected with getting one's own back, showing the purchase of the College of Heralds, and the installation of Walt Disney as King-at-Arms.

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## notes on new contributors

**to present and forthcoming numbers of film art**

RUDOLPH ARNHEIM, since the publication of his book *Film,* is regarded as one of the most brilliant writers on matters relating to cinema. In vanguard film circles his book has created a minor sensation giving, as it does, a complete definition of every fundamental of aesthetic film conception. Mr. Arnheim has also kindly consented to send us notes on the all-important film art congress to be held in Venice, August 1934.

BASIL WRIGHT we welcome as a contributor because he is, with Arthur Elton, and one or two others, one of the few men in England making real films which he writes, directs, AND EDITS. Director of *Windmill in Barbadoes, Liner Cruising South,* etc., etc.

ARTHUR ELTON'S film *Aero-engine* immediately labels him a creative film director in the best sense of the word. He was also the maker of that very fine documentary *Voice of the World.*

OSWELL BLAKESTON has made two short avantgarde films *I Do Love to be Beside the Seaside* and *Light Rhythms.* He is also a writer of great ability, having contributed to many papers including *Seed* (of which he was an editor), *Architectural Review, Soma, Week-end Review, Windsor Quarterly* etc.

IRÈNE NICHOLSON is now Review Editor of *film art.* Her understanding of cinema aesthetics has labelled her as one of the foremost critics of the country. She has also had poems, stories, etc. published in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Week-End Review.*

NANCY CUNARD is well-known for her writings on the negro, the negro and the film, etc., and is just having *Negro,* an anthology, published by Wishart & Co.

MARIE SETON is now our special international correspondent. Lately she has been working with V. I. Pudovkin, and will be writing on her experiences. Articles of hers have also appeared in several other English reviews.

continued on page 64

**FILM REVIEW:** - - - - - IRÈNE NICHOLSON

# deserter
## by V. I. PUDOVKIN

*Deserter* is a stirring experience. But the calm moments remain longest in memory. This is no criticism of Pudovkin's quick cutting but a statement of his unique quality. The mood of each scene borrows half its effect from the mood of every other. Actual physical emotion is aroused to a degree impossible in any static art, or one that can be momentarily suspended. Pudovkin's is a musical technique. There is a similar quality in drama, but, though there is a continuous ebb and flow of emotion towards one larger climax, yet it is possible in reading to stop, recalling a single line or phrase for its own sake.

Shakespeare could thus play with beauty, which is as dangerous a toy as fire; especially in film, where it is attained with such a facile mechanism. Pudovkin austerely resists temptation. There could have been much superficial beauty, but images lovely as stills were on the screen for a split second. They were not their own justification but one note in a phrase, meaningless except in their context. No wonder *Deserter* fails in part, not in its filmic sequences where music and image together complete, not echo the content, but in the tedious passages where content gains the upper hand of art and we are treated to sociological debates.

Film is as legitimate a medium for propaganda as any other and is wider of appeal than literature. But in literature we can verbally distinguish between poetics and a thesis, whereas in film we have at present one word only. Documentary is useful, but already it has grown vague in definition, including both the superficial advertising of cine-poems and purposive propaganda which can never be poetic. Socialism may be poetry, as much as Capitalism or Pantheism, so long as the accent is not upon that ubiquitous suffix. The Socialism must be inherent in the form, which it is not always in Pudovkin. A more economical use of words would better have attained his end. Remember their admirable use in *Sous les Toits de Paris*: the whisper, " non ", whisper, " non ", " alors c'est non?", " oui ".

Pudovkin does not explore equally every possibility of film. His technique is musical and any break in the rhythm is fatal. Because his place among the great directors is assured, it is a tragedy to see him in artistic bondage. If he were a poet he could work as he pleased and risk the financial consequences. As he is a film director he must be financed from outside, and the dictates of the Soviet, though not petrifying like the dictates of Capitalism (they are in fact conducive to vitality), are apt to leave the artist wondering what exactly is his function in society.

## contact

directed and photographed by PAUL ROTHA

At last a film directed, mounted and photographed by one man, an artist, yet they advertise it in pale letters as a secondary attraction. March out the cavalcade but what is worth showing hide under a bushel—such is our legendary modesty.

Clarity, a classic virtue, is in the photography, in the clear lighting which disdains a misty chiaroscuro, and in the direct cutting. Panning is a little too frequent and conveys the aviation sense not nearly so effectively as the scared birds and the upturned heads of niggers. Movement, from the lapping of waves and the rhythm of fishermen to the revolutions of an aeroplane propeller, bears a direct time relation to the cutting.

Dynamic titles, which form part of the film's essential rhythm, are an important innovation and a relief from the customary facetious spoken commentary. But one wonders whether the written word, far more than the spoken, is not an illigitimate tool for the film director, whether Rotha is not underestimating the power of his purely photographic montage. The question cannot be answered in a hurry. Though many of the titles are superfluous, some verging on the grandoise, others (BIT BY BIT for instance) are too good to dismiss with a theory.

It remains only to mention the sound accompaniment, music blending here and there with aeroplane noises or the roll of drums, occasionally and with gratifying restraint, lapsing into silence.

How much better is this documentary (a lyric really) than the usual plethora of superlatives, puns and the picturesque!

I. N.

## poil de carotte

directed by JULIEN DUVIVIER

Jackie Coogan is a back number and juveniles spring up like mushrooms overnight. Most of them are young only by standards of feet and inches, stunted adults rather than children. Even Hans Feher can be admired only as a phenomenon. But with Robert Lynen precocity is beside the point. He is a boy, and it is only when the story insists on attributing sexual instincts to a child of eleven that he is forced into an alien character.

*Poil de Carotte* is a sincere story but with over much Oliver Twist barbarity to be swallowed quite whole. It has however the simplicity of emotion and setting which is so badly needed as an antidote to studio sophistication. It has no concern with filmic technique but as a talking picture (with all the faults that the name implies) it must rank high.

I. N.

## paris-mediterranee

directed by JOE MAY

In the Paris scenes the humour is adequate and the sound effectively counter-pointed. On the road there is a well cut sequence and a lovely shot of poplars against the sky (constructive plagiarism from the Dutch picture). But the Mediterranean air does not prove salutary. The humour becomes banal and the sound lapses into musical comedy theme-song standards.

It is interesting to compare the grace of Annabella when directed by Clair with her artificial movements in this film.

I. N.

## cargo from jamaica

directed and photographed by BASIL WRIGHT

The same poetic cinematicism which prevailed in *Liner Cruising South* and *Windmill In Barbadoes* is inherent in this. A quiet, exquisitely photographed, beautifully mounted, essay of work being done—work which means cargoes from Jamaica. And I don't think anyone has ever photographed the lovely heads of negroes with such an eye for pure sculptural beauty.

B.V.B.

## aero-engine

directed by ARTHUR ELTON photographed by GEORGE NOBLE

Lack of space prevents a long review of this film, though it deserves two pages. Industry: the work: craftmanship: the finished product.

After 4000ft of lovely cinema showing the aero engine being made, the magnificent moment comes: the first flight. For pure visual thrill, and impressionistic beauty, and cinematic value, the sequence of the aeroplane's first flight is unsurpassed. This sequence alone is a film in itself, and at that one of the finest that has ever come from England.

It should be hardly necessary to add that the sound will be specially selected music. Music based on real sound.

B.V.B.

## le loup garou

The essential of tragedy, that struggle between free will and fate, is missing from *Le Loup Garou,* which consequently fails to achieve even the minor force of an *M* or a *Mädchen in Uniform.* But the power of Kloepfer's and the phenomenal quality of the child, Hans Feher's acting, reach a depth of emotion which the over refinement of most film technique does not allow.

Panning, which usually slows up the action, is used by Feher to record the mental fever of the hunted pair. A swinging shot of a woman and a boy hurrying up a long flight of steps is cut to a passage-way which is quiet and simplified in every line. This is story-telling in poetic manner, evidence that the cinema will proceed along a line other than the novelist's.

## liner cruising south

directed and photographed by BASIL WRIGHT

Here is an advertisement worthy of the pictorial standard of McKnight Kauffer. If a little of it is ordinary it is the fault of the super producers who cannot resist the fashionable slickness of a luxury liner. But the photography has a fine feeling for surface textures and the opening and closing sequences are pure poetry. The film is set to music and the few unobtrusive titles allow a freer photographic movement than was possible in *Contact,* though the film remains more certainly an excellent advertisement than a lyric.

I. N.

# enslaved by sound

**ANDREW BUCHANAN**

The newest product form most studios confirms the fact that the Film is still dominated by the microphone. Furthermore, it reveals many producers who, having felt the sound track tightening its grip around them, are making vain attempts to struggle free more fiercely than ever before by introducing " movement " into their productions. As they are supplying a commercial market however, they are endeavouring to accomplish the hopeless task of making pictures on the recognised rigid basis, to avoid being regarded as peculiar, and their product unacceptable for public release, and at the same time introducting what they are pleased to call " movement ". In other words, the commercial film invariably contains one hundred per cent dialogue, and is naturally static. But too many static films and an almost total absence of movement of any kind has created the fear that the public will demand pictures which really move. Hence the attempts to strike a happy medium which prove to be most unhappy. Personally, I infinitely prefer the perfectly motionless picture, such as *Dinner At Eight* which makes no pretence at being a film, to the weak, falsely constructed pictures which are neither one thing nor the other. If studios must concentrate upon subjects which are fundamentally static, and unsuitable for portrayal on the screen, surely it is wiser to make them true copies of their originals, than to " adapt " them, which means little more than introducing vast and unnecessary ballrooms for the sake of swirling skirts, locomotives and smoky funnels for the sake of filmic transport, or superimposed bottles and glasses for the sake of heaven knows what. *Dinner At Eight* appears undisguised. In its class it is perfect. In other hands, it might have become a " film " full of movement. Fortunately, it is just itself—a very wonderful proposition—making no attempt to solve the question of movement in sound films, and having no more association with the screen than any other dinner in any other home.

As for the acute problem of the limitations which the sound track sets, and the ultimate solution of dialogue being superseded by post-synchronised *Sound-Music*—though it is a comparatively easy achievement for certain types of production, it presents difficulties which are almost insurmountable to the makers of dialogue feature films on the conventional lines demanded by the commercial market.

In the Documentary field, dialogue is practically ignored, and the sound track kept at bay, for industrial, agricultural and natural exterior sequences of a non-fictional character call for silent production. It is this freedom from microphones which enables documentary producers to create the maximum amount of movement, nothing hampering the picture, either during the shooting, or in the cutting room.

Post-synchronised sound, however, is something more than reproducing horses' hoofs a trifle late, engine whistles, or tumbling water. It is a process which, in my opinion, holds the key to the art, as yet comparatively unexplored, of combining into a perfect unity—music and film—*music based on natural sound*—sound translated into music—the whole describing and

**aero-engine**

direction : ARTHUR ELTON
photography: GEORGE NOBLE
production : GRIERSON

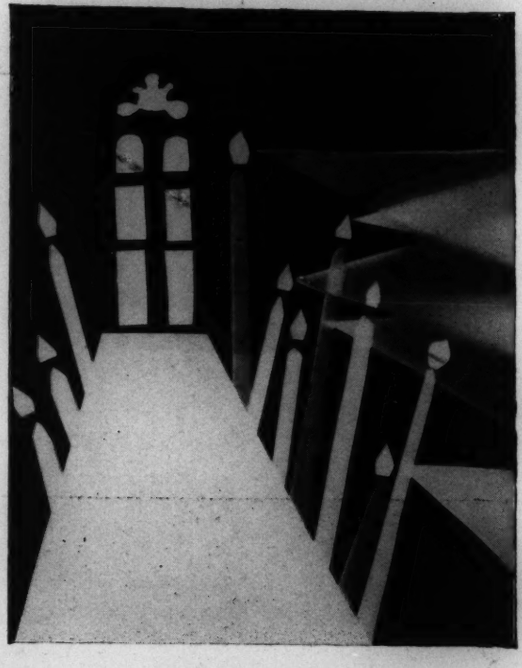
(see film review)

**windmill in barbadoes**

direction and photography :
BASIL WRIGHT

## two movements from a film and a christmas card

OSWELL
BLAKESTON



Movements from a film in which light is not a mere illuminant, not mere butter spread over the bread of some lens reality. We always are interested in the personification and dramatisation of light; and in this film there are shapes of light which are blessings and shapes of light which are witchcraft. One light personality tries to approach another, to establish contact; fights with darkness and is driven back by revelation. A screen poem founded on a novel by Charles Williams, perhaps?

Yes, a Christmas Card! To find why we have chosen *Two Film Movements and a Christmas Card* we might turn to the essays of Max Ernst. "Let a ready-made reality with a naive purpose apparently settled once for all (i.e. an umbrella) be suddenly juxtaposed to another very distant and no less ridiculous reality (i.e. a sewing-machine) in a place where both must be felt as *out of place* (i.e. upon a dissecting table), and precisely thereby it will be robbed of its naive purpose and its identity; through a relativity it will pass from its false to a novel absoluteness, at once true and poetic: umbrella and sewing-machine will make love." The Christmas card on the page turns it from a statement into a suggestion: the page makes advances to your ingenuity.

deserter

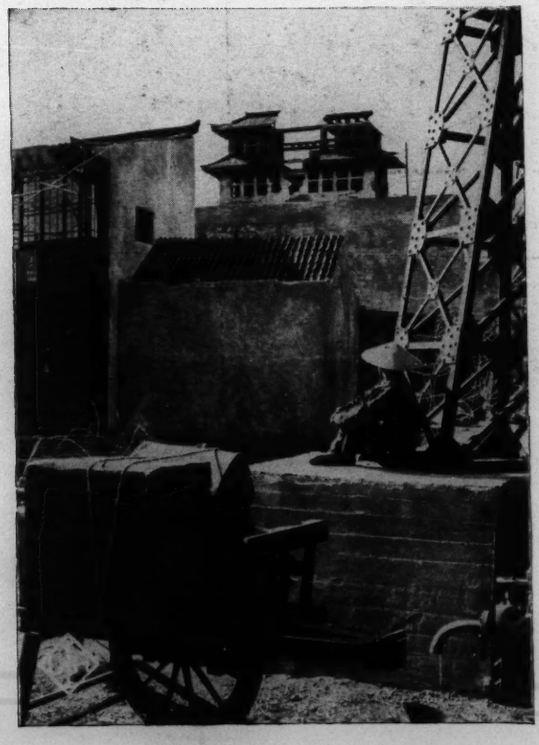
by

V. I. PUDOVKIN

(see film review)

**26 commissars**

direction : SHANGELAYA



**fleuchtinge**
(fugitives)

direction :
GUSTAV UCICIKY

photography :
FRITZ ARNO WAGNER

(see article 'stagnation in german studios')

**cargo from jamaica**

direction and photography
BASIL WRIGHT

production
GRIERSON

(see film review)

**machine**

from an Ideal-Cinemagazine by

ANDREW BUCHANAN

(see article ' enslaved by sound ')

**a nation awakes**

by
ERTOGROUL MUHSIN
(turkish)

(see article ' imitation and creativeness in the balkan cinema')

strengthening (by becoming an integral part of) the visual images.

I know of no factories in which full orchestras play throughout working hours, and yet an industrial sequence when seen on the screen accompanied by " descriptive " music instead of the natural sound (or din) of the factory in question, does not strike a false note on the audience, for the result is the dramatising of that industry without in any way falsifying it. In other words truly " adapting " it to the screen.

Along such lines will be found the solution to the problem of how to give back to the film its movement—how to transform it into the *international* medium of expression it used to be.

Let this point be carried a stage further. We have raised the question of permitting music to work its way into the core of a production; why not, for a change, attempt to show the musician on the screen? It will open a number of pitfalls into which we shall promptly fall, but that will hardly matter, of course. Our musician sits alone in the middle of an enormous setting resembling a few cathedrals knocked into one, and called his music room. He is to play a solo—his own composition. Now where is the movement to come from? Does this mean that because there can obviously be no real movement that he is not a suitable subject for the screen, and that if we did our real duty to the film, we should record his sound track only, and project it at a theatre, so that the musician should be heard but not seen? Very possibly that is just what it does mean. But if we particularly wish to film this person, would it not be wiser to regard him as one of the guests for *Dinner at Eight,* and make one basic shot of him which does not alter throughout his solo, and declare that as no fundamental movement occurs in the life of a musician whilst he is playing a solo, that no attempt has been made to create any? Or should the point be strained and some movement be introduced? I avoid the possibility of " illustrating " his solo with descriptive shots of waterfalls, over-exposed cows and worn out sea waves. Nevertheless, the principle by which such shots are *Cut in* is the fundamental principle by which all basic shots are given movement. Let us, therefore, avoid illustrating the solo, but take, in addition to the basic synchronised shot, a number of mute shots of the musician and his instrument, in angles carefully selected to show the relation between one and the other, and cut these in, so that the audience shall have a variety of glimpses of the musician—his head, his hands, his instrument. Whatever one's point of view may be, the result would be far less boring to *watch,* irrespective of the degree of appeal the music has upon the ear. And the musician is an example of countless subjects which arise for treatment on the screen—subjects which are perhaps totally unsuitable for filming. Yet they offer opportunities for experimenting with the sound track, which are all contributing towards a solution.

At the other extreme is the production of films intended to convey pure movement, such as *Machine* and *Time,* the two rhythmic "dance" sequences

which I produced recently. To have contemplated shooting these subjects in sound would have been suicidal, for they are composed of an unbelievable number of very short shots, demanded by the cutting bench. At least six sound cameras would have been necessary to record direct effects, together with an orchestra capable of playing isolated sequences of perhaps, two bars extracted from any part of intricate ballet music, at frequent intervals. Such pictures cannot possibly be made in conjunction with the microphone, but they can be made in silent form, and when completely cut, post-synchronised.

Movement, therefore, can only be truly created with the aid of the silent technique. To compromise is technically impossible.

There are, and presumably always will be, two main categories into which films can be divided:—

*Dialogue pictures—static, national, belonging to the stage.*

*Sound films—movement, international, impossible to convey by any other medium.*

And never the twain shall meet, except on rather bad terms.

And yet despite the almost elementary nature of this point, how many people are there who differentiate between the Dialogue and the Sound film?

Alarmingly few.

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## notes on new contributors

continued from page 50

N. SOLEW is a well-known Russian film critic and theorist, and has had writings published in Russian, English and American reviews.

ROBERT FAIRTHORNE, with EDWARD ASHCROFT, is one of our assistant editors. His brilliant writings on film theory have received many favourable comments, and several have called him the 'English Rudolph Arnheim'. He has also had work published in other magazines and has made experiments on small size film.

JEAN COCTEAU is author of *Les Enfants Terribles, Potomak,* and many other brilliant works, mainly relating to the workings of the sub-conscious mind. He was the director of *Le Sang d'un Poete.*

S. M. EISENSTEIN and V. I. PUDOVKIN are considered by many as two of the world's greatest directors. Eisenstein made *Ten Days, Potemkin, General Line,* etc., and Pudovkin *Mother, St. Petersburg,* and *Deserter.* Their films are some of the finest examples of film art in existence. Eisenstein's *Romance Sentimentale* (Silver Lining) has been described as a 'personification of sublimated cinematic art'.

Our present contributors to *film art* are equally well-known as our future ones. It is not our desire to publish only the work of known writers, or directors. We also hope to publish work from talented newcomers. Thus it is hoped that *film art* will become a review not only of vital importance and interest to those interested in films but a review which, because of its writers and its outlook, will be of great significance to those interested in cinema and literature.

# imitation and creativeness in the balkan cinema

MARIE SETON

The essence of all true film artists, whether they are actors, cameramen or regisseurs is the uniqueness with which they present their material. It is this unique quality, allied to a confliction that film is the art medium most essentially in accord with the demands of to-day and of the future, and therefore to be experimented with, that has made Chaplin universally appreciated if not wholly understood, Edward Tissé, a personality as well as a camera who contributes a very special quality to the work of Eisenstein and Griffith, Pudovkin, Pabst and John Grierson pioneers in their time and country.

If artists must be unique to leave a trace of their work for posterity much depends upon their choice of material, the raw subject matter. Pabst on reason of his choice will be remembered when Lubitch, a superb master of technique and finesse will be forgotten for Pabst's material is more basic and his understanding and valuation of meaning and human behaviour profounder.

All the great film artists have worked in their different moods with the stuff of life. Either it has been a complex philosophy of life created in filmic terms such as the underlying motive of Chaplin's work; or a movement, political in its manifestation, within the bowels of the masses, the material of Eisenstein and Pudovkin; or it has been the recording of the day to day experiences of a group of people who reflect the life and psychology of a nation, or a section of it, as in the case of Grierson's *Drifters*.

In each case these men have taken their material from reality, given it a form not always realistic, for realism is not art before it has been given a form, but never have they been basically away from truth. This development of the essentially natural material and the outstanding success that has been achieved should be an example to all the countries away from central Europe who are endeavouring to develop their own cinema. Such a use of real material is very applicable to the countries of eastern Europe, Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece who at the present moment are trying to make films for their own, if not export consumption.

Turkey, with a regisseur Ertogroul Muhsin, who studied in Paris, Berlin and Moscow started off reasonably well with documentry film *A Nation Awakes,* based upon Kemal Pasha's overthrow of the Sultan. Since then, however, Muhsin has fallen into the habit of imitating German operetta with westernized music and a chorus of bathing belles. Though this may be successful in competing with the flood of foreign import films it is entirely dissociated from Turkish life and mentality and if it is to be considered in the light of propaganda for Europeanization, then it is of the stupidest and most pernicious nature.

This state of affairs has come about in Istanbul, where there is a well equipped studio, (the only one in the Balkans) simply because the only company producing, the Ipek, is entirely commercial in aspiration and its directors, the nine Ipekci brothers hold all the reins of the Turkish cinema

in their hands. Bulgaria too is at a low ebb, her cinemas flooded with the warmongering and war glorifying output of Nazi Germany. Then in Greece there have been a number of promiscuous productions and only one man, Dem Gasiades, is making an individual effort to create a sincere and characteristic cinema in Greece which is creative and not imitative. He has directed everything from avant-garde to advertisement pictures and worked for fifteen years on and off in Germany.

The peasants and the magnificent mountain scenery of the Peloponneses gave Gasiades material for his film *Astero,* shown in London some months ago with deplorable titles. It is a love story in which the regisseur has introduced peasant types " because " as he says " I saw the early Russian films and I wanted to see what I could do with natural types." To a considerable degree he has succeeded in creating a national film in which the behaviour and customs are actually those of the Greek peasant, idealized but not Hollywoodized.

His second film, an Enoch Arden story, *The Storm Passes* has simplicity and strength, though its development is far too leisurely, a fault that Gasiades will have to guard against. His most successful film is *Apaches of Athens* and it has a peculiar charm and a fantastic humour not unlike René Clair's, but with less finesse and self-consciousness.

An Athenian gamin having rescued the daughter of a nouvo-riche family newly returned from America masquerades as a princling, inherits a fortune from nowhere and marries a flower girl. The continuity of *Apaches* lacks directness so that occasionally one is left in mid air surrounded by a riot of absurd but attractive characters. Here again natural supers have been used and there are some good sequences of Athens market.

All Gasiades films have been made as silents for lack of money, but he has sound effects obviously in mind. He is the one man in the Balkans who is not prepared to follow Hollywood or Berlin blindly but he is handicapped in every case by his leading actors, all of them theatre artists, who are all camera conscious and having been trained in a theatre where certain movements have a traditional meaning the effects they achieve are stilted and often doubly false since all Gasiades's characters are drawn from the people, the peasant, the soldier and the Athenian gamins.

Nevertheless, despite their very obvious faults these films have all a stamp of individuality and sincerity, and, though they lack that balance and unity which marks a first class film out from its fellow they are a blessing after a welter of imitative sophistication for they are basically natural in their appeal and are therefore universally comprehensible as well as originally Greek.

# eisenstein and upton sinclair

**SEYMOUR STERN, etc.**

Barnet G. Braver-Mann wrote to Upton Sinclair regarding the mutilation of Eisenstein's said-to-be masterpiece *Que Viva Mexico*:

" THE RAPE OF *QUE VIVA MEXICO* . . . . A BRAINLESS ACT OF VANDALISM . . . . CRIMINALLY UNPARDONABLE TREATMENT OF A GREAT FILM CONCEPTION . . . . IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT FUTURE FILM HISTORIANS WILL RECORD YOUR (SINCLAIR & LESSER) VULGARIZATION OF QUE VIVA MEXICO AS THE WORST CRIME IN THE ANNALS OF CINEMA ".

Upton Sinclair, on the other hand, has protested against this shouting by people who have never seen the film. In one respect he may be right, but the report in TO-DAY'S CINEMA rather gives things away. " In spite of all the fuss " writes their correspondent, " I see little in THUNDER OVER MEXICO (the Sinclair edition) than a tremendously fine travelogue ". This speaks for itself.

The questions are what exactly can be done to restore the original negative to Eisenstein, and what is going to happen about *Thunder Over Mexico*?

*Thunder Over Mexico* is being shown in America, and we shall have a review in our next number. And although a " film " has been made from Eisenstein's celluloid the original negative still remains. Seymour Stern, one of the organisers of the campaign to save the film, in a letter to *film art* said: *The urgent need at this moment is for world wide propaganda against the release of the Sinclair-Lesser bastard version.*

Perhaps the most important point in the Experimental Cinema Manifesto is the following:

We call upon art lovers throughout the world to denounce *Thunder over Mexico* AS REPRESENTING THE MOMENTARY TRIUMPH OF AMERICAN MONEY OVER EVERYTHING SINCERE AND NOBLE AND PASSIONATE IN THE REALM OF ARTISTIC CREATION.

In many ways QUE VIVA MEXICO was considered to be the life-work of the man who was to film and mount it. Sergi Eisenstein, one of the greatest directors in the world, has (to put it plainly) had every foot of his film taken from his hands. The creator of *Que Viva Mexico* has left behind him the material for a film which Hollywood considered might be useful for the background for a Clark Gable film to have its " romantic setting " in Mexico. Mexico—which, according to certain Hollywood ideology, is " the land of palm olive men and free women ". Eisenstein may have been expensive, or a trouble to Sinclair and Co., but we are dealing with facts, and not sentiments.

And the facts are that QUE VIVA MEXICO is being shown in a mutilated edition called THUNDER OVER MEXICO, and that a film which might have been one of the greatest motion pictures ever made has been reduced to a " travelogue " which contains NOTHING of the original other than the superb photography of Eduard Tissé.

The prostitution of the artist to commercialism.

A STOP PRESS! AT THE MOMENT OF WRITING " THUNDER OVER MEXICO " HAS JUST ARRIVED IN ENGLAND, HAVING BEEN BROUGHT OVER BY MR. SOL LESSER.

# stagnation in german films

JOHN C. MOORE

1932 Mr. W. Bryher of CLOSE-UP wrote to me on the following lines:—

" . . . If the new regulations in Germany are carried into effect, Mr. Pabst will no longer be able to work there, being an Austrian and not a German. I have just returned from Berlin, where half the film world was preparing to leave, not being of German birth . . . "

Therefore the official announcement that G. W. Pabst had commenced work on the film CETTA NUIT-LA for the Pathe-Natan Studios in Paris, was not altogether unexpected.

Fritz Lang is another of the long list of capable directors expelled from Germany, and like Georgi Pabst he has found a refuge in the French capital, where he is busy filming Ferenc Molnar's LILIOM, under the supervision of Eric Pommer. Hans Schwarz of THE WONDERFUL LIE and HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY fame, and Joe May, who has ASPHALT and HOMECOMING to his credit, are two other directors of the U.F.A. studios, who have made France their domicile.

It is only natural that this wholesale departure of talent should severely effect the German film indutsry, and the result indeed is a temporary stalemate in the studios. With the exception of a number of NAZI films, which scarcely warrant serious attention, no films of exceptional merit have been produced of late.

Outstanding amongst the Neu-Babelsberg productions as yet unfinished, is the bi-lingual film FLUECHTLINGE, which is now being shot under the direction of the—to English film audiences unknown—director Gustav Ucicky. What makes this film attractive to filmgoers in this country is the fact that Fritz Arno Wagner, favourite assistant of Georgi Pabst, is handling the camera, while Walther Roehrig, whose architecture (if my memory does not play me tricks) was so much admired in FAUST, will be responsible for the designs.

The cast of the German version of FLUECHTLINGE is made up of a curious mixture of acting material (Kaethe von Nagy and Hans Albers) and of proven acting talent (Eugen Kloepfer and Hans Adalbert von Schlettow). Kaethe von Nagy repeats her original performance in the French version, in which Pierre Blanchar, Vera Barnowskaja and Raymond Cordy take leading parts.

The theme of FLUECHTLINGE deals with a community of German peasants, who under the late Czar migrated to Russia and settled on the fertile soil of the Ukraine and along the Djnepr and Volga. With the fall of the Czarist Empire their farms became the battlefield of the Red and White Armies of Russia, a warfare which ended in the ultimate victory of the Soviet.

After the defeat of Wrangel, life for them changed to one of hardship and physical endurance. Leaving behind them their burning homesteads, they wildly fled eastwards from the red terror, and so began one of the

most tragic migrations known to the history of mankind. Through the barren wastes of Siberia they trekked towards a destination unknown, facing the perils of the desolate steppe. Progress, of necessity, was slow and grim, and as hunger, thirst and illness claimed their toll, this valiant band of fugitives grew smaller and smaller. Human endurance, however, reached its peak when, with salvation in sight, they were embroiled in the Chinese Civil War which was raging in Manchura, and once more battle played havoc with their already depleted ranks . . . .

It is clear to the reader that here we have a great theme, which contains all the elements that go to the making of an outstanding film: the struggle for existence and the struggle for life, with renewed hope as its ultimate goal.

The film should give F. A. Wagner plenty of scope to display his well known camera wizardry. For the benefit of our readers we have pleasure in reproducing in this number some exclusive advance "stills" from FLUECHTLINGE.

JOHN C. MOORE.

DISTRIBUTION: Universum Film A.G.
DIRECTION: Gustav Ucicky.
PRODUCTION: Guenther Stapenhorst.
CAMERA: Fritz Arno Wagner.

DESIGN: Walther Roehrig.
WITH
Hans Albers, Kaethe von Nagy, Eugen Kloepfer, Ida Wuest and H. A. von Schlettow.

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## attempt

Many of our readers will have no doubt heard of, and we hope visited, the Forum Cinema, Villiers Street, Strand, London where an attempt is being made to show artistic films. Maurice Hatzfeld, B. Vivian Braun and Irène Nicholson are arranging the performances in conjunction with Mr. H. J. Wakeling, a cinema manager who listens to reason. Censorship, a programme that must fill two and a half hours, the sweet habit of certain film renters saying films they no longer rent are 'destroyed', old worn out copies of films, and a host of other things have made work difficult. But as long as the renters *will allow* certain films (generally old) to be rented we have a long list of future presentations. It is hardly safe to mention any titles, as films have to be subject to alteration, but we have high hopes for early presentations of *Berlin, General Line, Brumes D'Automnes, Storm Over Asia, Melody of the World, Turksib, Fishinger's Abstracts, Romance Sentimentale* (Silver Lining), *The Bridge, Radio, Aero-Engine, Liner Cruising South, Cargo from Jamaica,* etc., etc., etc.

At the time of writing there is talk of it becoming a group, in order that anything may be shown, and particulars will be sent by The Forum Cinema or *film art.*

## BOOK REVIEW:

CINEMATIC DESIGN by Leonard Hacker. (American Photographic Publishing Company. $2.50.

Though published some time ago this book deserves special mention . . . . " a handbook for the amateur cinema artist and those lovers of the motion picture to whom visions of beauty, mirrored by the crystal lens, transcend all trivial representations that have marred adequate expression and labelled the motion picture as unworthy of consideration as an art ". Hacker says, only too truly, that it is from the sub-standard worker that film art should come since he need not and should not be influenced by the (supposed) necessities of commercialism. One has only to see the waste-celluloid amateur film clubs, in general, are making to realise how little this is appreciated. Part 1 is sane straight-forward film theory. To say " the film is a visual medium and not a literary one " sound very obvious. All right, watch the next English or American film you see.

It is pointed out that every sense can and should be represented, in cinema, through the most powerful of them all—visual. Music, Hacker says, should emphasise the content and mood of whole.

More important: " this limitation of employing only the visual sense is not a weakness but the very strength of the cinema, *for the limitations of an art are a stimulant to accent its individuality* " (my italics).

The chapters headed are FORM, RHYTHM, COLOR, AND RELATIVITY in Motion Pictures.

Chapter on RHYTHM ends:

" A film becomes cinematic only when it manifests the cosmic principles of form and movement ": a definition of cinematicism in a film.

Part 2, after a brief introduction, is a series of short scenarios. Film poems and symphonies based on movement. Hacker's fault is a constant use of the dissolve; he considers the direct cut uncinematic, and in such scenarios as ' Afternoon in a Canoe " would have no cutting at all, using the dissolve in its place. In the next number Mr. Hacker will give reasons for his use of the dissolve.

This review would be incomplete without mention of Constance Hacker's abstractions which illustrate the chapter headings. In essence these drawings are as filmic as the best photomontage.

B.V.B.

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A copy of the August number of FILM LIGA, the official monthly organ of the Dutch Film Society, has been sent to us for reviewing.

The publication contains a highly instructive article by the Editor Mr. L. J. Jordaan (the Dutch Paul Rotha) entitled SIX YEARS IN ARMS, an interesting survey of the Dutch advance guard cinema movement which, after six years of successful operation, has just been dissolved. And what reminiscences they are! Debates with Eisenstein—the Arrogant, Cavalcanti —the Nervous, Clair—the Jovial, Ruttman—the Distinguished, Richter— the Businessman, Germaine Dulac—the Restless and Pudovkin—the Modest. Altogether an excellent review of a useful organisation, which should be proud of its memories. After six years' devotion to the art of the film, the Society has now ceased to be. May it rest in peace!

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J.C.M.

FILM LIGA: August (Sixth year).
Editor: L. J. Jordaan.
Editorial Offices: Titiaan Straat 26, Amsterdam-Zuid (Holland).

## photographie

(obtainable in England from Batsford & Co.)

## modern photography

(The Studio Ltd. London)

Several of the photographs in these annuals, and particularly in *Photographie,* are bad in themselves, but would be good if they were stills from films. In *Modern Photography* Jean Moral's low angle of the figure putting on clothing is, in very essence and atmosphere, a cinematic picture. A really good cinema still is only seldom an excellent photo existing for its own sake. And vice versa. Number 81 in *Photographie,* a close up of a woman's hair, is a lovely thing in itself, and yet in this case it could be from a film.

To look through these photographic annuals reminds one of some of the old French abstract films. The compositions, the contrast in light and shade, the textures, which are features of so many photographs might be stills from those exotic 1928 abstracts (one used to see them at the Avenue Pavilion in London or Studio 28 in Paris) of which France's young film students are famous.

To make films one must have a photographic sense of mass and individual rhythms and designs, and there is much to be gained in this respect by glancing through these pleasant annuals.

B. V. B.

## BOOK REVIEW:

CINEMATIC DESIGN by Leonard Hacker. (American Photographic Publishing Company. $2.50.

Though published some time ago this book deserves special mention . . . . " a handbook for the amateur cinema artist and those lovers of the motion picture to whom visions of beauty, mirrored by the crystal lens, transcend all trivial representations that have marred adequate expression and labelled the motion picture as unworthy of consideration as an art ". Hacker says, only too truly, that it is from the sub-standard worker that film art should come since he need not and should not be influenced by the (supposed) necessities of commercialism. One has only to see the waste-celluloid amateur film clubs, in general, are making to realise how little this is appreciated. Part 1 is sane straight-forward film theory. To say " the film is a visual medium and not a literary one " sound very obvious. All right, watch the next English or American film you see.

It is pointed out that every sense can and should be represented, in cinema, through the most powerful of them all—visual. Music, Hacker says, should emphasise the content and mood of whole.

More important: " this limitation of employing only the visual sense is not a weakness but the very strength of the cinema, *for the limitations of an art are a stimulant to accent its individuality* " (my italics).

The chapters headed are FORM, RHYTHM, COLOR, AND RELATIVITY in Motion Pictures.

Chapter on RHYTHM ends:

" A film becomes cinematic only when it manifests the cosmic principles of form and movement ": a definition of cinematicism in a film.

Part 2, after a brief introduction, is a series of short scenarios. Film poems and symphonies based on movement. Hacker's fault is a constant use of the dissolve; he considers the direct cut uncinematic, and in such scenarios as ' Afternoon in a Canoe " would have no cutting at all, using the dissolve in its place. In the next number Mr. Hacker will give reasons for his use of the dissolve.

This review would be incomplete without mention of Constance Hacker's abstractions which illustrate the chapter headings. In essence these drawings are as filmic as the best photomontage.

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## CORRESPONDENCE:

### continuation of H. P. J. MARSHALL'S letter

# 'class-war and criticism'

Hitherto all classes have used their class-outlook as if it were a world-outlook, putting forward their class-purposes as if they were the whole of society's purposes, that is the propogation of sectional interests in the name of common interests; class-art under the guise of pure-art, aesthetics; subjective, prejudiced, class criticism in the role of objective, independent, class-less criticism. In politics the favourite gag is 'for the good of the people, the nation, society, the public' which means 'for the good of a capitalist section of the people, society etc., for a government is but the executive committee of the ruling class.

It is only the last class on the economic arena, the working class, who can and do without fear do away with this deception and 'scorn to hide their views and aims'* but proclaim them as definite class aims for the liquidation of all classes including themselves.

* vide 'Communist Manifesto' Marx and Engels.

The ultimate value of the film is not that it is a *medium* for the communication of ideas and expression of ideals, that is its primary value, applicable to all art (so-called pure-abstract art we have pointed out is also a communicator of class-ideas and ideals so to speak in a castrated from).

The ultimate value of film art depends on its interpretation of life—on the value of its purpose, ideas, ideals.

And these in the final count are class-interpreted purposes, ideas, ideals.

So let us take stock: which point of view are we really expressing (consciously or unconsciously), and which are we going to propogate with a clear conscious purpose?

To be 'sincere' or 'independent' is not enough, the point for *whom* is one sincere, for *what* purpose independent.

The social purpose of bourgeois class criticism is to prevent their purpose being made obvious. To confuse critic and spectator with form, style, aesthetics, composition, angle, beauty, while under them all is rammed home the idea, the purpose of the ruling class.

*The purpose of the bourgeoise-capitalist class is profit, the protection and increasing of that profit, and the prevention of others getting it: and all that it implies.*

That is the idea and the ideal underlying all capitalist class activity, no matter what branch—whether political, philosophical, scientific, artistic, religious: that is their world-outlook, their 'independent' point of view; all for profit: religion, science, art: crises, unemployment, war.

And the job of the genuine critic is to reveal the underlying connections between the former and the latter e.g. art in the crisis: the crisis in art.

The critic must guide—yes—but *for whom,* in what way, with what and where to? What guide has he himself, what compass, map, plan, science, philosophy; what social-conscious world-outlook? What standard of values?

" To put public in way of " not only compensation of form but of content, of social purpose; and this he can *only* do by imparting his opinions. For a critic *not* to impart his opinions, means *not* to communicate his criticisms, and so his cessation as critic!

No—a critic by his own substandated opinions, his thought-out judgments must ' stimulate an appreciative state of mind ' that appraises, judges, values—not just form, external appearances, but the underlying meaning and purpose, and how this purpose is fulfilled.

So at the rock-bottom we come to *purpose*—one must choose that and everything follows. The purpose of the bourgeois capitalist class is clear and as Marx long ago pointed out—the ruling ideas of any society have always been the ideas of its ruling class: so with the mass of criticism.

Now just as in the socio-economic field the only fundamental irrevocable opponent of the capitalist class is the proletariat, the working class—so in theory and purpose the only real alternative and opposite of bourgeois ideology is the revolutionary ideology of the class-conscious workers and their allies.

I say ' their allies ' to exclude any misunderstanding—members of other classes dissatisfied with the inhuman purpose of their class have all through history thrown in their lot with the exploited class as the only power that can and will eventually throw off the chains of their exploiters—for they have nothing else to lose and a world to gain; for their labour alone can build their world.

Marx and Engels were two of the bourgeois intelligentsia who did this —theoretically formulating their reasons and the practice of history into what is now known as the Marxist theory—the materialist understanding of history—the philosophy of dialectical materialism. The ultimate purpose of such being: ' from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs '.

That is the antithesis of the bourgeois creed of ' to him that hath shall be given, to him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath ', (difficult to remember the Bible here!)

The communist idea is finding the first stages of its realisation is Soviet Russia—where under the dictatorship of proletariat (worker and peasant) art and culture is flourishing anew fertilised by a human purpose and a class-conscious philosophy.

That is the fundamental difference between Soviet film art and bourgeois —that is the source of its originality and power, its sincerity and conscious aim.

And it is just this fundamental difference of purpose that critics ignore (whether for ' independent ' or ' aesthetic ' reasons, it matters not) and it is just this difference that must and will be made plain, willy-nilly critic or no, in the heightening struggle of class—exploiter and exploited—capitalist culture or socialist—back to the dark ages or forward to a classless society—chaos or cosmos—crisis or five-year plan—these are the irreconcilable antithesis that critics must face—and choose!

The Manchester and Salford Workers' Film Society have arranged several performances which include Dreyer's *Jeanne D'Arc*, Ruttmann's *Melody of the World*, and other films. It is also desirous of entering the field of film production, and especially of films of social value.

This society from the beginning has always been considered one of the most important outside London, and we would make no hesitation in advising our northern readers to join. The subscription is only 10/- and the secretary is T. Cavanagh, 86 Hulton Street, Salford.

* * * *

Both the Lombard Restaurant, Chelsea, and Bill's Restaurant, Charing Cross Road, London are acting as agents for *film art*. The experiment seems to prove that food and film theory go well together.

The Lombard make excellent use of their pleasant situation by holding periodical exhibitions of paintings, sculpture, etc. Perhaps soon an exhibition of film " stills "?

Apparently ' filmland's rendezvous ' as Bill's Restaurant is called hold small public meetings on Monday nights in which discussions are held; " excluding " the manager pointed out " politics and art ". Film art?

* * * *

Much effort is being made to form a Croydon Film Society. An excellent idea shared by everyone except the local council. The secretaries are G. R. Bailey and T. D. Griffin-Beale. Members are wanted and those wishing to join should write to G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street, Croydon.

* * * *

Announcement in trade paper:
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Experimental Cinema quoting Hollywood advertising for " The Yellow Ticket ":
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Raoul Walsh's " YELLOW TICKET ".

* * * *

Description of a type from an English film which has just gone into production. The heroine, we presume:
J——— Young but looks older, coldly beautiful, refined and selective. Luxury-loving. Still a virgin . . . but on the verge.

* * * *

As announced elsewhere the third (Spring) number of *film art* will be a special issue. In this will be included an article " half a year of *film art* " being a survey of creative cinema and ourselves since our first number. Also there will be published several of the letters received. (Letters calling us " fluff-headed highbrows of Chelsea's backstreets " and " young Gods of cinematic art ", letters which begin " dear mr editor, i suppose i should write to you like this " and a host of others from France, Italy, Germany and U.S.A.)

But, more seriously, our past influences and future plans will be discussed, and we hope to be able to announce several important things to our readers.

There will be many notable contributors to *film art* ' transition ' number, and a large number of films reviewed.

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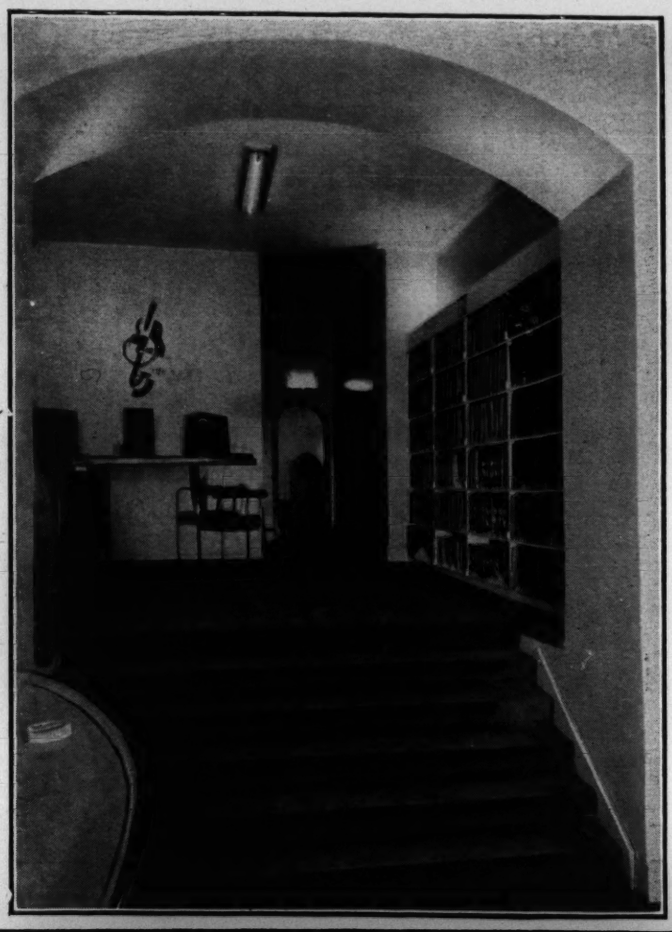

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film art 'transition' number

# 3

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articles by V. I. PUDOVKIN, etcetera

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# film art


edited by B. VIVIAN BRAUN

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